

UNCLAS PRAGUE 001399

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR EUR/ACE TOM ADAMS AND LIANE DORSEY; USAID FOR
EE/AA THOMAS MEFFORD, EE/ECA MARILYN SCHMIDT, AND PPC/SPP
GARRET HARRIES

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAID](#) [PREL](#) [EZ](#)

SUBJECT: CZECH REPUBLIC: SOLIDLY ON BOARD WITH BELARUS
ASSISTANCE COORDINATION

REF: STATE 168836

¶11. (U) SUMMARY. The Czech MFA and its partner NGO People in Need (PIN) are strongly committed to democracy promotion in Belarus. The GOCR and USG approaches to Belarus are fully aligned, and Czech MFA is actively engaged in molding EU policy on Belarus transition. MFA has approved USD 18,000 to support a public opinion poll project in Belarus, and seeks to support a joint Czech-Polish project for radio transmission into Belarus through financial and programmatic support in direct cooperation with PIN. Both Czech MFA and PIN are dedicated to taking the Czech Republic's & lessons learned8 based on its own transition to a democracy and actively marketing it across borders. END SUMMARY.

¶12. (SBU) Visiting USAID Deputy Assistant Administrator for Europe and Eurasia Thomas Mefford, accompanied by visiting Czech Desk Officer and econoff, met September 26 with Gabriela Dlouha, MFA Director for the Office of Transition Promotion (TRANS) to discuss the Czech Republic's roadmap as an emerging donor, with particular focus on Belarus. Dlouha emphasized that TRANS is a critical part of the overall Czech development assistance system, and is directly linked to GOCR foreign policy objectives. TRANS seeks to support Czech NGOs (among which PIN is its primary partner), in foreign countries, as well as in the development of Czech civil society, by encouraging these NGOs to seek an active role in public discourse on foreign policy. Dlouha noted that while TRANS has a strong and clear vision of where it wants to take its mission, it faces a steep learning curve when it comes to program management and implementation. Responding to Desk Officer's inquiry about coordination with the EU, Dlouha said that GOCR will remain cognizant of Brussels, but also seeks to realize its own vision of democracy promotion and will try to influence EU policy to that end.

¶13. (U) Dlouha cited democracy promotion in Belarus as a key objective. MFA plans to use radio broadcasts to advance democracy in Belarus, in conjunction with PIN and a Polish NGO, East European Democracy Institute. MFA will also provide USD 18,000 to support a public opinion poll project in Belarus. MFA plans to support the radio project via three avenues: financial support, serving on the board of radio for Belarus, and programmatic contributions in cooperation with Czech Radio. (She noted that GOCR successfully convinced the EU that the radio project tender should be for programs in Belarussian, not just Russian.) PIN will supply pre-recorded radio programs, which the Poles will broadcast into Belarus. The programs will feature prominent Czechs, such as Former President Vaclav Havel, expressing their views on the democratic process. MFA also seeks to bring people from Belarus to the Czech Republic and transmit their stories over Czech Radio. DAA Mefford commented that Belarus was an opportunity for GOCR to put TRANS on the map.

¶14. (U) In a separate meeting on September 21, poloffs met with Simon Panek, Director of PIN, and Igor Blazevic, head of PIN's Human Rights Section, to discuss the radio project and PIN's ongoing efforts to promote democracy in Central Asia and the Middle East. Panek said the EU has declined to fund the radio project because the Polish NGO has not existed for three years, a requirement for EU funds. Panek also hinted that the tender for this project might have been written to favor Deutsche Welle. In addition to the radio project, PIN also offered to provide as many as 10 trained and experienced local election monitors for upcoming elections in Belarus. Panek clarified that such assistance would need to be part of a larger monitoring effort led by others.

¶15. (U) COMMENT: Democracy promotion is one of few areas where GOCR is willing to stand tall and shape EU policy formation. The USG should engage GOCR given this timely nexus between USG and GOCR foreign policy evolution embracing democracy promotion. Post suggests State and USAID consider a coordinated approach to inform and engage the MFA (and through it, also PIN) -- whether through co-financing projects, co-sponsoring events, and/or shared country/policy assessments -- in our democracy promotion activities around the world, and particularly in this region. Post Belarus

assistance primary POC is Political Officer Sarah Peck.
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